



Meeting Notes

Attendees: See Attached List

Date/Time: 7/10/02 4:00 to 7:00PM open house &
7:00PM Presentation

Project No.:

Place: West Running Brook Middle
School, Derry NH

Re: Derry Public Informational Meeting

Notes taken by: Bruce A. Tasker
Noted By: Jeff Brillhart

Prior to the formal presentation, plans were set up in an "open house" setting to address issues, comments, and questions in an informal matter with the public on an individual basis.

For the formal meeting at 7:00PM, Jeff Brillhart opened the meeting and made introductions. He explained that this meeting is one of five Public Informational meetings being held by the Department in each of the communities along the study section of I-93 from Salem to Manchester. This meeting focuses on the status of the project since the last meetings were held in November and December of last year and is part of the Department Public Information meeting process initiated in the spring of 2000.

Jeff explained the Department is charged with improving the capacity and safety of this 18-mile section. He explained that in the Salem and Manchester areas, the highway currently carries over 110,000 vpd (vehicles per day) and 70,000 vpd, respectively. I-93 has a theoretical capacity to carry in the vicinity of 60,000 vpd to 70,000 vpd. By 2020, the projected volumes are approximately 140,000 vpd in Salem and 85,000 vpd in Manchester. The highway is over capacity today and the situation will worsen over time. Given the volume of vehicles on the highway, and the narrow width of the highway, I-93 is less forgiving than it otherwise might be, and consequently less safe.

In addition, given the age of the highway and the fact that it has not seen much in the way of major maintenance over the last 30 to 40 years, the highway is in need of major reconstruction.

The Department is conducting the design and evaluation process using the format of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A Scoping Report was published in the Spring of 2000 and addressed the project purpose and need, the existing conditions of traffic and infrastructure needs, and resources of concern.

Rail opportunities and what might be issues if rail service was implemented was studied. This evaluation was documented in a Rail Alternatives Study published in November of 2000.

The Department looked at a wide range of alternatives, conducted ridership analyses of various modes of transportation, and considered the merits of the possible alternatives. The alternatives were screened that would not address the project purpose and need. This evaluation and screening was documented in the Rationale Report published in the spring of 2001.

Currently, the Department is completing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement discussing the reasonable range of alternatives and how they might affect the environment and address the project purpose and need.

As part of the study the Department has considered:

- A bike route along the I-93 corridor from Exit 2 to Exit 5 as part of a larger north - south of bike system study being done by the Department from Salem to Concord. This larger study will look at how the I-93 bike route might be incorporated to facilitate north-south bike movements.
- Potential secondary growth. Secondary growth may happen as a result of making NH more accessible by widening the highway, which in turn increases the construction of more homes and business in the communities along the corridor and outside the corridor, which may in turn create their own environmental impacts. These impacts to natural resources caused by secondary growth are of concern.
- Improving incident management. The Department has been working with local safety (police and fire) agencies, the state police, and the Federal Highway Administration to consider what steps might be taken to improve incident management capabilities; that is, addressing accidents along I-93 in a more timely manner to minimize delays and congestion. Some measures have been implemented and other will be added to improve the incident management capabilities before construction, during construction, and after construction is completed along the corridor.
 - A large range of mitigation possibilities. Mitigation measures are intended to offer a means to offset the impacts associated with widening the highway. These measures include creating wetlands and floodplains and preserving important natural resource areas.

Jeff provided an overview of issues received at the various local meetings. That feedback focused on:

- Whether to widen I-93 to three or four lanes in each direction. The Department is proposing to build four lanes from Salem to Manchester.
- The need to minimize impacts to private properties.
- The need to construct sound barriers to lessen noise in neighborhoods adjacent to the highway.

Individual towns have also expressed their particular concerns relative to how the project affects their community.

For Salem a primary issue has been that the project not exacerbate the flooding that occurs in the Town and within the Spicket River watershed.

For Windham and Salem, a predominant issue has been the need to address water quality and highway runoff, especially with Canobie Lake (drinking water supply for Salem) and Cobbetts Pond located adjacent to the corridor.

Windham is also very much interested in ways to reduce the overall footprint of the highway through the Exit 3 interchange.

In Londonderry and Salem, the neighborhoods have expressed concerns about proposed park and ride lots.

Plan Presentation:

Tony Grande then described the plans. He noted the typical roadway cross-section, which includes four 12' travel lanes and 12' wide shoulders on the inside and outside of each barrel. Space (ranging from 60' to 90') for a potential future rail line is also being proposed to be reserved within the median as part of this project. A bike trail is conceptually depicted at the toe of slope or top of bank along the outside of the corridor from Exit 2 to Exit 5. Sound walls will also be constructed in selected locations throughout the project.

Tony then described the 200-scale plans for the entire project beginning at the MA/NH state line and proceeding north to the I-93/I-293 split in Manchester. The 200-scale plan depicts the Department's Preferred Alternative, which is to widen I-93 to provide four travel lanes in each direction. Tony briefly presented the various design elements for the entire project proceeding from north to south:

- The potential future rail corridor would begin in Massachusetts and as it crosses the border into New Hampshire it would be located along the west side of the highway up to Exit 1 where it then crosses over the SB barrel and into the median. The rail line would then remain within the median all the way up to just north of Exit 5 where it would tie back into the existing rail bed to the west.
- The proposed bike path would begin at the Exit 2 park and ride and continue along the corridor, connecting with each of the park and rides, before ending at the Exit 5 park and ride.
- Beginning at the MA border the highway would be widened to accommodate four lanes in each direction. The bridge at Cross Street would be replaced; the Exit 1 ramps would be reconstructed to improve the existing geometry; and the bridges over NH 38 would also be replaced.
- In the Exit 2 area, the interchange would be reconstructed to a diamond type interchange configuration, eliminating the existing loop ramps. Pelham Road would be widened through the interchange area and a new park and ride lot is proposed in the southeast quadrant with access from South Policy Street to Raymond Avenue. The Brookdale Road Bridge would also be replaced.
- Approaching the Exit 3 area, the NB barrel will be shifted closer to the SB barrel, which will also be relocated and shifted slightly towards the median. A new diamond type interchange configuration is also proposed and a section of NH 111, west of I-93, will be relocated to the north and widened. A new park and ride lot adjacent to the NB barrel is also proposed.
- In general, all of the I-93 bridges south of the Exit 3 weigh stations are being replaced while the majority of the bridges to the north have been held as controls during the design, which will allow many of these newer bridges to be kept in place and widened.
- Approaching Exit 4, the bridges over Lowell Road, Fordway Extension and Kendall Pond Road will all be widened.
- Through the Exit 4 area, the westerly edge is held as a control and the widening occurs to the east. The existing SB ramps will be retained while the NB ramps will be reconstructed. The

NH 102 bridge will be replaced, south of the existing bridge, and NH 102 will be widened. The Ash Street Bridge will also be replaced.

- Just south of Exit 5, the bridges over Stonehenge Road will be widened. The existing diamond interchange will be reconstructed with the same type configuration and NH 28 will be widened through the interchange area. The bridges over NH 28 and over the abandoned rail line will be replaced. A new park and ride is also proposed in the northwest quadrant.
- Proceeding into Manchester the bridges over Bodwell road and Cohas Brook will be widened to accommodate five lanes in each direction to allow for merging and diverging traffic for three lanes for I-93 and two lanes for I-293.
- Sound walls will also be constructed at ten different locations identified along the corridor. Five locations were identified in Salem, and partially carrying over into Windham. One sound wall was identified in Derry, two in Londonderry and two in Manchester.

Tony then described the project as it affects Derry and the Exit 4 interchange area using 100 scale plans.

I-93 Widening

Beginning south of the Windham/Derry Town line, the I-93 design is controlled by the recently replaced and widened North Lowell Road bridges where the inside median edges of both the NB and SB barrels are held and the widening occurs to the outside. To the north through Kendall Pond Road, the NB and SB barrel widening shifts to the west to avoid impacts to a prime wetland.

Between Kendall Pond Road through the Exit 4 interchange to Stonehenge Road, I-93 is widened primarily to the east. This layout retains the existing SB ramps by holding the westerly edge of the existing I-93 SB barrel with all widening of the SB barrel and construction of the NB barrel occurring to the east. The configuration of the NB ramps would be retained, but the ramps would be shifted to the east, reconstructed and lengthened to accommodate the highway widening. This option shifts the I-93 NB barrel closer to Wheeler Pond. No construction would be required in the actual pond area. Some impacts to the wetlands would occur. North of the Exit 4-interchange area, the widening continues to hold the westerly edge of the SB barrel. In doing so the apple orchard property is not impacted. This shift does impact a house on the westerly end of Red Lane and the pavement and loading area for two commercial buildings (Londonderry Commercial Center and Stom Commercial Park) along the westerly side of Londonderry Drive. In the vicinity of Stonehenge Road, the widening of the highway and the bridges over Stonehenge Road occurs to the outside for both the NB and the SB barrels.

NH 102

NH 102 would be generally realigned south of existing NH 102. This would allow the use of the existing bridge to maintain traffic while the new bridge is completed. The new bridge will provide for 2-EB thru lanes, 2-EB left turn lanes, 2-WB thru lanes, a single WB right-turn lane and 5-foot shoulders and sidewalks. The westerly approach work can be completed in the vicinity of the existing NH 102 EB to I-93 SB on-ramp. The proposed NH 102 realignment will tie back to the existing alignment just west of the Burger King drive.

Ash Street/Pillsbury Road Bridge over I-93

The Ash Street/Pillsbury Road Bridge over I-93 would be replaced to accommodate the I-93 widening and the area in the median being preserved for future rail. The existing bridge would be replaced in its existing location and a temporary detour bridge would be constructed to the south of the existing bridge to maintain traffic.

Noise Barriers

Three noise barrier locations between the Windham /Derry Town line and the Stonehenge Road area are being recommended:

- I-93 NB near Matthew Drive, Derryfield Road and Friar Tuck Lane
- I-93 NB near Seasons Lane
- I-93 SB near Trolley Car Lane

Property Acquisitions (excluding out buildings)

Tony identified the locations of the two homes in Derry that would be acquired as part of the highway improvements through this segment.

I-93 (Derry)

Spinnaker Drive (2 homes)

Wetland Mitigation

Jacob Tinus explained that as part of the federal guidelines for projects like this the Department is required to mitigate impacts to wetlands and natural resources. As such the Department has been in the process of identifying possible wetland mitigation sites to offset impacts resulting from the project improvements. Jacob noted that the total number of wetland acres impacted by the Department's preferred alternative from Salem to Manchester is approximately 85 acres. In the Town of Derry, the wetland impacts involve approximately 6 acres, consisting mostly of forested wetland and emergent marsh.

As required, the project must provide mitigation to compensate for the impacts to the natural resources. The mitigation is generally made up of four forms:

- Wetland restoration, which restores previously-filled wetlands.
- Wetland enhancement, which involves re-establishing hydrology to an area and/or planting additional wetlands plants.
- Wetland creation, which creates wetlands out of upland or dry land area.
- Preservation, which involves preserving existing wetland and adjacent upland.

Jacob explained that preservation has become an increasingly popular form of mitigation for many larger projects of late, as the Resource Agencies and the communities see it as a mechanism to preserve tracts of land and buffers to important local natural resources. Management of these areas can then be turned over to community or environmental organizations. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has indicated support for preservation when it protects regionally important wetlands or aquatic resources.

In all, the Department has visited more than 60 possible mitigation sites throughout the project corridor totaling several thousand acres of land. The evaluated sites were suggested to NHDOT by local residents, local communities, or by the resources agencies. Jacob reviewed a 1" = 1,000' plan of the project corridor that showed all of the potential wetland mitigation sites to date that the Department is considering.

Jacob noted that the Department has reviewed the merits of the Syviak Farm Property with the Town of Derry since early in the process of site selection. Located east of I-93, between the abandoned B&M rail corridor and Windham Road, the 200-acre site is mostly undisturbed, and contains a farmhouse, abandoned pastures and orchard, a farm pond (now a cattail marsh), and prime wetlands consisting

largely of emergent marsh. Areas of mature upland forests add to the diversity of the site for wildlife habitat.

Jacob then explained that the final "package" of mitigation properties would reflect a best attempt to compensate for wetland losses due to the highway widening project. Discussions will be ongoing to reach consensus on the final components of the compensatory mitigation package.

Schedule

Jeff Brillhart noted that this is the last of a round of five meetings being held in the corridor communities in June and July. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled to be published in July. A design Public Hearing is scheduled for September of this year. The Final Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled for completion in the spring of 2003. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2004.

Comments/Questions:

- Comment: The existing geometry along I-93 has a lot of tight turns. It would appear that with a rail line in the median, the train could not run more than 30 mph.
- J. Brillhart: The train can operate between 50 and 60 mph for most of the corridor, however there is a difficult turn at Exit 5. At this location we expect that the train would be coming into the future Exit 5 rail station and slowing down to load and unload passengers at the proposed park and ride for Exit 5.
- Comment: If four-lanes are built southbound, are you going to run into the same kind of congestion problems as we are seeing with the four-lane to two-lane problems along I-93 northbound near Exit 1?
- J. Brillhart: Currently, the highway goes from three lanes northbound in Massachusetts to four lanes in New Hampshire and then back down to two lanes very abruptly. This problem will be solved by the four-lane layout. For the southbound direction the transition from four lanes to three lanes will be much smoother. There is also the possibility of extending the widening down to the Massachusetts Route 213 interchange. Potentially, the fourth lane would end at the I-93 SB off-ramp that is going onto Route 213. Approximately 25% of the SB traffic is taking that exit, so that would largely solve that problem. Massachusetts is completing a study that is anticipated to propose building four lanes through Andover and Methuen, MA.
- Comment: Is the Department looking at Intelligent Transportation (ITS) technology?
- J. Brillhart: The Department is currently looking at such technology. It is proposed that ITS technology be made available before, during, and after construction. This technology includes radio advisory measures, variable message boards, traveler information, and other communications to warn motorists of accidents, construction delays, etc. The Department is also working with the Town of Salem to use this technology along NH 28 to enhance that corridor when it is used as an alternative north-south route.
- Comment: I am concerned about the bike path crossing back and forth using local roads, potentially creating unsafe situations between bikes and the cars on these roads.

At Fordway Extension, for example, the bridge abutments are close to the road, sight distance is poor, and the traffic goes quite fast in that area.

J. Brillhart: It may be necessary to widen the shoulders on the local roads. Typically, it would be preferable to have a minimum four feet wide shoulders for bicycles. The Department will look at the merits of the I-93 bike trail from the broader perspective of north/south bike movements from the state line to Concord. We have looked at the constructibility of a bike trail along I-93. Those sections of the I-93 bike trail that have merit will probably be constructed.

Comment: Is the decision to approve the project based on information presented here this evening or will it be made at the Public Hearing in October?

J. Brillhart: The Public Hearing is the first step of the formal approval process. The Public Hearing is taped so transcripts will be made of all the comments and questions that are discussed. The letters that come in after the Public Hearing, during the comment period will also be added to the transcript. The Department will review all the testimony, catalog it, and will come up with recommendations as to how those issues/requests/comments should be treated. All this information will be passed along to the Executive Councilors chairing the Public Hearing. The Councilors will ultimately make the decision as to whether this project should go forward or not. These plans tonight and those at the Public Hearing are preliminary plans and are subject to change and will continue to undergo changes during the process. The Public Hearing process could result in minor changes in some areas, and in other areas there could possibly be major changes. After the Public Hearing process, the approved plans go to final design and there are still more opportunities to make changes to the plans, if necessary. As the final designs are completed, right-of-way plans will be developed, and based on input from individual property owners, further design changes could occur. The designs have actually changed during the construction if a better, more practicable solution is found. As we get further into the process the changes will hopefully be of less magnitude.

Comment: Are the sound barrier locations finalized yet?

J. Brillhart: The location of the sound barriers will be finalized as a result of the Public Hearing. Again the details of the sound barriers could change to some degree. If people have issues of substance, the Department will continue to review them.

Comment: How many properties in Derry will you be acquiring?

T. Grande: Two residential properties at the end of Spinnaker Drive are proposed to be acquired.

Comment: What about the increase in air pollution from the traffic? I would like to see more bus service, train service, etc.

J. Brillhart: The Department is developing the project with alternative modes of transportation in mind. Today there is one park and ride that provides bus service to Boston at Exit 4 and it is generally nearly full. There are three new park

and ride lots proposed to improve opportunities to increase bus and carpool ridership. Hopefully, this fall, funding from Washington will become available to purchase additional buses so that bus operators will be able to service these new park and ride lots as they come on line.

Trains are in our future and eventually a train will be needed here in the region served by I-93. Rail is an expensive endeavor, not just to build it, but to maintain it and service it. The highway needs to be widened and made safer and more efficient. Eventually the highway will reach capacity again in the future, however, the Department does not think five lanes will be a reasonable solution in New Hampshire. When the traffic dictates a need for five lanes in the future, the transit options would seemingly become more cost-effective and be implemented to address the future capacity needs.

Air quality is less a function of the highway being widened, than it is of having clean emissions.

Charles Niebling: (Society for the Protection of NH Forests): Traditionally, the Forest Society has steered away from transportation projects, but this one has been described as the largest public works investment in the State since the original interstate construction, and I would like to share the following comments/questions:

- We need to see more serious consideration of rail as a transportation alternative incorporated as part of the overall solution to I-93 rather than a theoretical possibility sometime in the future.
- We agree the highway needs to be widened, however, the jury is still out as to whether four lanes are needed in each direction.
- A more pro-active approach to secondary impacts is required.
- The results of the secondary impact study need to be shared with the public in other adjacent communities. There is concern that the widening of I-93 will entice an additional 40,000 people to move to NH, and at a rate of 2.5 acres per person, will result in an additional 100,000 acres of development and further loss of open space.
- There is concern that the Department has only communicated its perspective and not necessarily considered what is the right thing to do or best thing for NH given the impacts the project will have. The Department has a chance to take a more holistic approach with the solution and provide a more comprehensive mitigation package. Commissioner Murray is concerned with getting permits, rather than meeting with the Environmental Community half way.
- What range of alternatives will we be able to respond to in the NEPA process?
- How has the Streamlining process helped given that the discussions were closed to the environmental community?

J. Brillhart: It's difficult to know where to begin.
The streamlining process is an outgrowth of the federal highway legislation of which Senator Smith was involved. Environmental Streamlining calls upon the Department to work with the Resource Agencies throughout the preliminary design process so that at the permitting stage, permits can be issued promptly without revisiting issues. In this case the Streamlining process allowed for

consensus at major milestones along the way. Consensus was found and signoffs given for the Project Purpose and Need. Subsequently, the Rationale Report was published which presented all alternatives that might be considered to address the needs of I-93. Those alternatives that would not potentially solve the problems of I-93 were screened and those that would meet the project purpose and need were recommended to be carried forward. Again, with the Streamlining process, the Department received a sign-off from all the Agencies.

Charles Niebling: I understand the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did not sign off.

J. Brillhart: The EPA signed off. The EPA did request that the Department work with Massachusetts to get a study going to consider transit opportunities from Boston to Manchester. NHDOT is currently negotiating with Massachusetts to come up with a study scope to consider transit (rail and bus service) possibilities. The new study will use the information developed for the I-93 project and supplement it with more information of what the issues are in Massachusetts. Obviously, having rail service in New Hampshire that does not extend into Massachusetts will not be productive. We need to understand the constraints and possibilities in MA, and begin laying the groundwork for bringing rail service here in New Hampshire in the I-93 area. Senator Smith has proposed the federal government earmark funds for the study so the two states don't have to argue over whose share is what. Hopefully, it will get funded this Fall.

As far as the mitigation issue for this project, the Department and the resource agencies have agreed to disagree. The resource agencies mitigation package as originally proposed is, from the Department's perspective, not acceptable. The NHDOT is a transportation agency. We recognize that transportation projects have impacts and we have an obligation to mitigate the resources impacted. The Department has a sizeable mitigation package to address the direct impacts to natural resources. In addition, the Department is considering a technical assistance program to provide master planning and zoning assistance to the 23 communities in New Hampshire that may be subject to secondary growth resulting from this project.

The Department used an Expert Panel process to look at secondary growth. It was a good effort and identified some issues. It considered what growth in New Hampshire might be if you do and if you don't widen the highway. The panel consisted of 15 people with a wide range of opinions. There are a number of factors to consider as to why people come to NH. Will more people come because the highway is widened? Perhaps. Will it result in 100,000 more acres being impacted? I don't think so. The panel estimated that 140,000 people will come to the 23 communities whether the highway is widened or not. It will be important for NH to deal with growth better than we have. We need to come up with better land use management policies.

Comment: Who has the final authority as to how these issues are going to be resolved?

J. Brillhart: At the State Level, the Executive Council will give us a lot of direction as to what should be done, what changes ought to be made and what else should be considered. The Federal Highway Administration will determine whether or not this project is within their guidelines and whether the Department has considered all the issues and informed the public. The Army Corps of Engineers will have to

issue a 404 Permit and the State Wetlands Bureau will have to issue a permit as well.

Nancy Gerard: (Conservation Law Foundation (CLF)): The CLF has the following comments:

- The NHDOT needs to switch its focus from moving cars to moving people and goods.
- With respect to mitigation, the CLF agrees with EPA. The CLF notes that Commissioner Murray has indicated that she doesn't want to mitigate secondary impacts because she would have to answer to the 49 other Transportation Commissioners nationwide. That is bad policy and poor reasoning. Mitigation for secondary impacts has occurred in other states such as Pennsylvania, Utah, Wisconsin, and California.
- The environmental streamlining process was not inclusive. The Rationale Report made a determination of which alternatives would be profiled and which alternatives would not move forward. The EPA, the Department of Environmental Services, and Conservation Law Foundation all provided comments raising concerns with respect to eliminating the rail alternatives. The assumptions used in that Report were erroneous.
- The CLF would prefer to see the Department look at the rail alternatives as part of the highway expansion now. Rail should be part of this process and it is being pushed aside. The CLF feels there is a need to give people a transit option in New Hampshire.

J. Brillhart: The streamlining process was a closed process. The Agencies discussed the issue at their opening meeting and felt that having it closed gave the Agencies a better opportunity to work things out among themselves. There have been numerous public meetings for people and groups to provide input and express opinions. In terms of the Rationale Study, the Department feels that different modes of transportation are being incorporated for this project. What the Rationale Report said was, that even if a rail and bus service is implemented, the highway would still have traffic problems that would not be addressed short of widening the highway. From that perspective we need to get on with widening the highway and make provision to not preclude other options for the future.

Comment: Is Massachusetts willing to work with NH on making improvements relative to rail?

J. Brillhart: Massachusetts has indicated they are willing to work cooperatively with NH provided funding is available. They have no funding available for these studies.

Comment: I agree with the need to expand I-93 to four lanes in each direction. I would prefer to see most of the mitigation take place in the five corridor communities and not in the other 18 outlying communities. I would suggest that the other 18 communities start planning for growth by looking at their zoning, master plans, etc.

As far as the rail is concerned, I do not personally see the Manchester to Lawrence line as being a credible corridor. Rail in the I-93 median seems to make more sense. The widening project needs to move forward now. I feel we have not made much progress over the past three years.

Comment: Will adding the new Exit 4A make a difference in how the Department designs the I-93 widening?

J. Brillhart: The Department has been working with the Towns' consultant on their Exit 4A project. There will be more coordination as the engineering for the Exit 4A project becomes more defined.

Comment: Why does the Town have to pay for the Exit 4 A interchange and not the Federal Government?

J. Brillhart: There is a long history to this. My understanding is that at one time, it seemed to be very feasible to have the Towns and whoever fund the Exit 4A interchange. Since that time, the State of NH developed a Ten-Year Transportation Planning process for prioritizing and addressing transportation improvements. To date, the Ten-Year Planning process has included only limited funding for the construction of Exit 4A. As it stands right now, the Towns will need to come up with most of the funding for this interchange.

Comment: The widening of I-93 is going to bring more traffic, which in turn will solidify the need for the Exit 4A interchange. Therefore, I feel the Federal Government should fully fund this project and not the Towns.

Richard Russman: Thanked Jeff for the thoughtful responses and continued open-mindedness for this project.

Linda Wilson: (NH Department of Historic Resources): Linda noted that she has attended many project meetings during the past 2 years to hear what the corridor communities are thinking. It is disappointing that more citizens along this section of the I-93 corridor which passes through the population center of New Hampshire have not attended the meetings to find out what is going on and to provide input for the project. I would like the citizens of these New Hampshire communities to work together and be more pro-active.

Comment: I have the following comments:

- Regarding mitigation outside the I-93 corridor, I feel there are special places that will be profoundly affected because of project related growth beyond the corridor communities. For example, the Massabesic Lake area supplies water for Derry and other communities, and it will be affected by the growth. I do not think that the Massabesic area was on the EPA mitigation list and it should be on the EPA mitigation list. There are other special places that may not be on the EPA list. There are special places to be preserved in the middle and southern parts of NH that should be considered without going too far north. I would urge the Department to not totally shut the door on what ideas the EPA has presented.
- I would also like to advocate three lanes for the widening. I think the citizens need to be educated relative to traveling alone in their cars. I feel many citizens should open their eyes to other modes of transportation. I ride the bus into Boston and its terrific. I would like to see the buses inter-connected

so that people who live in this area who now work in Boston, Lowell, Manchester, Concord, Nashua can take advantage of buses. I also would like to see rail revitalized and make it possible to get more trucks off the highway.

- I would like the sound walls to look different and be more attractive.
- What consideration is being given to the wildlife that is currently living in the wetlands to be filled along the highway? Are there plans to help the wildlife there? What species are in those wetlands? I would hope that this would be part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

J. Brillhart: We do have wildlife impacts along the length of the highway and they are addressed in the EIS. There will be impacts, but because the highway already exists, the impacts are less severe then they would otherwise be if we were building the highway from scratch.

Comment: There could be wildlife communities on one side of the highway that should be re- connected by a bridge or underpass to communities on the other side of the highway.

J. Brillhart: Perhaps if culverts need to be replaced, consideration can be given to enlarging the new culverts to better provide for wildlife passage under the highway. Relative to the EPA list, there were 10 sites proposed. These were scattered about the southern part of the State. The Massabesic Lake area in Hooksett, Auburn and the Hackett Hill area were among those proposed by the EPA. The Department is reluctant to mitigate in the towns that aren't along the corridor. The towns along the corridor are all directly impacted by the widening, and these communities are bearing the brunt of the secondary impacts. The Department feels that they need to benefit from the mitigation for this project. In the past, it was required that the mitigation take place as close to the resource impact as possible. With that said, the Massabesic Lake area does provide a link to the corridor communities in that the lake serves as the water supply to Manchester and parts of Londonderry and Derry. The Department is still taking feedback on this issue and there will be more discussion with the EPA.

Comment: I think that now is the time to plan for rail. If rail is built, in the highway corridor how would someone get on the train?

J. Brillhart: The proposed park and ride lots are being located so that in the eventuality rail is constructed in the median of I-93, the park and ride lots would also act as rail stations.

Comment: I think that the small mitigation sites that the Department is considering (those that are 6-7 acres in size) are worthless and that larger site for wildlife should be the focus.

J. Brillhart: The wildlife impacts associated with widening I-93 are not as substantive as they might otherwise be given that they affect only the edges of those systems. The highway is not a bypass, passing through undisturbed areas fragmenting wildlife systems. The focus from the Department's point of view is not on doing something for wildlife. However, the project does have impacts to floodplains and we need to have mitigation for floodplains impacts in Salem. The 6 or 7 acres

sites in Salem, for example, are intended to mitigate floodplain impacts and at the same time provide some wetland replacement. Salem and Windham have water quality concerns with Canobie Lake and Cobbetts Pond. Some of the small sites under consideration will help address water quality. The preservation sites under consideration can serve as nuclei for Towns and other environmental groups to expand upon through LCIP and other programs.

Comment: I do not feel light rail will be used. I think that rail should provide freight service. Will the Dunkin Donuts and the other businesses at Exit 3 be impacted?

J. Brillhart: This will impact Dunkin Donuts. They will have to relocate.

Comment: In Windham (just north of Salem/Windham Town line), going southbound, the sun can be blinding when coming around the curve. Some type of shielding should be considered.

J. Brillhart: The Department will look into the issue.

Roberta Robie: I have the following comments:

- I believe the NHDOT has done a good job on this project. People live and work in NH, and people will continue to come to NH, regardless of whether I-93 is widened or not. The concern for secondary impacts is real, but the communities need to develop a better growth management plan, as Derry has done, or suffer the consequences.
- On the issue of rail, you will find that with rail, development also takes place as the rail provides additional transportation opportunities. How long will the federal government continue to subsidize rail service to the tune of millions of dollars?
- As far as mitigation is concerned, it does not seem practicable to mitigate for potential secondary impacts. How does one distinguish how much the population will grow in certain areas with or without I-93 being widened? Some towns are growing more than they would like because the Towns have not done a good job planning their growth. Developing communities need to plan now before they have any secondary growth.
- Lastly, the highway needs to be fixed now for safety reasons. The present situation is not safe.

Comment: At Exit 4 and 5, traffic is still backing up on NH 102 and NH 28, respectively. This project will solve the traffic problems on the highway, but will it address the traffic on the side roads?

J. Brillhart: The proposed design takes into consideration the traffic growth over a 20-year period. The intersections at the interchanges will be improved to provide for thru movements as well as left and right turning traffic. The ramps will be longer so traffic won't back up onto the highway as it does today. Our studies show that

traffic will move through these areas more efficiently with less delay and backups than today.

Comment: Commerce today requires trucks, and the flexibility they provide, not trains and freight service. I believe we need four lanes and we should do it now.

Comment: A number of people have commented on rail being developed in conjunction with the widening. In the long run, such an approach would appear less costly.

J. Brillhart: This project as it stands is estimated to be \$320M. By adding rail in median the cost would increase by another \$100 to \$200 million dollars and could delay the process. It would be ideal to plan for everything and pay for everything at once. Unfortunately, we can't afford to do everything and choices have to be made. In this case, rail is clearly not going to solve the problems of I-93. I believe we need to get on with the widening of I-93 and plan for the possibility of rail as part of the widening layout. The Department has done that by leaving space in the median, building the bridges over the highway to be long enough to pass over the space where rail can be, and constructing park and ride lots so they can accommodate bus and train service. To this extent the project does plan for rail service in the future.

Comment: America today depends on trucking. Trucks pay the most to use the highway. We need to account for truck traffic and provide for their needs.

Comment: Rail service can pay for itself. The Portland to Boston line is making money and bringing in business.

Comment: It seems to me that we are being short-sighted in terms of the planning for this project. The project will have a tremendous impact on these communities. The project will only result in more maintenance and more salting. We need to take our time and get more communities involved.

J. Brillhart: We have been considering the needs of I-93 for over 12 years. If the public feels strongly that we need to study the situation longer, then perhaps we will. Having attended all the meetings over the past 3 years, my sense is we are not too far off the mark with what is being proposed.

Paul Hopfgarten: (Derry Town Council) There has been plenty of opportunity for public input for this project. We could continue this public hearing process forever, but I do not think the turnout would be better. Relative to the concern about population increases as result of the widening, in my opinion, housing prices have a lot to do with residential growth here in NH. Property is less expensive in NH. There are many other reasons why people come to New Hampshire as well. People will continue to come to NH whether the highway has 2, 3, or 4 lanes. We need to fix the highway.